

HEATH, John D. and Eugene ARIMA, 2004 *Eastern Arctic Kayaks: History, Design, Technique*, with contributions by John Brand, Hugh Collings, Harvey Golden, H.C. Petersen, Johannes Rosing and Greg Stamer, Fairbanks, University of Alaska Press, 172 pages.

David W. Zimmerly

Volume 30, numéro 1, 2006

Problématiques des sexes
Gender issues

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/016159ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/016159ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Association Inuksiitiit Katimajit Inc.
Centre interuniversitaire d'études et de recherches autochtones (CIÉRA)

ISSN

0701-1008 (imprimé)
1708-5268 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce compte rendu

Zimmerly, D. W. (2006). Compte rendu de [HEATH, John D. and Eugene ARIMA, 2004 *Eastern Arctic Kayaks: History, Design, Technique*, with contributions by John Brand, Hugh Collings, Harvey Golden, H.C. Petersen, Johannes Rosing and Greg Stamer, Fairbanks, University of Alaska Press, 172 pages.] *Études/Inuit/Studies*, 30(1), 189–192. <https://doi.org/10.7202/016159ar>

«Some seals have holes in their skin, white pustules on their meat, and skin rashes». Les peaux de phoque et de caribou sont également employées à la fabrication de vêtements. Celles-ci semblent également étranges aux habitants de Clyde River: «The fur comes out too easily and the times seals molt and grow new fur seem to be different».

Pour conclure, le CD-ROM présenté par Shari Fox donne une voix à deux groupes inuit aux prises avec d'importantes transformations écologiques modifiant à différents degrés le climat, la faune, la flore et leurs habitudes de vie. Il ne s'agit pas d'une analyse climatologique des causes et effets dus aux changements climatiques mais plutôt d'un recensement de témoignages sur les réalités quotidiennes, les réadaptations et les craintes vécues par ce peuple du Nord face aux transformations de son environnement. Il vaut donc la peine de consulter les résidents de l'Arctique, ne serait-ce que pour entendre ces voix inquiètes pour l'avenir de notre planète.

Benoit Ethier
7245, av. de l'Épée # 10
Montréal (Québec), H3N 2E2
Canada
benoit.ethier@umontreal.ca

HEATH, John D. and Eugene ARIMA

2004 *Eastern Arctic Kayaks: History, Design, Technique*, with contributions by John Brand, Hugh Collings, Harvey Golden, H.C. Petersen, Johannes Rosing and Greg Stamer, Fairbanks, University of Alaska Press, 172 pages.

In many professions, but especially in anthropology, there exist a great number of dedicated amateurs who are amateur in the best sense of the word, *i.e.* they pursue a field of study for no pay, but with great zeal and often, skill. True, they usually do not speak and write in the jargon of the trade, but that is more to their credit than anything else. In my own studies of traditional Arctic watercraft, I have come upon a number of such people scattered throughout North America and Europe, joined together by correspondence in pursuing their great love. I was fortunate as a young anthropologist to be put in touch with John D. Heath who had then been working diligently for over 20 years to amass as much data as possible on arctic kayaks. He had built replicas of Eskimo kayaks, journeyed to Alaska and later, Greenland, to talk directly with kayak makers, visited museum storerooms throughout the United States and Canada in order to see and record the details of kayak construction and carried on a voluminous correspondence with anthropologists, naval historians and other—often at his own expense and during precious short vacation time. John willingly sent obscure facts and details to me that helped immensely with my own studies.

Eastern Arctic Kayaks: History, Design, Technique was published by the University of Alaska Press shortly after John's death. This eclectic collection of essays might best be considered a kind of *Festschrift* honouring a passionate amateur. The editor of this volume, Eugene Arima, was my predecessor as Arctic Anthropologist

at the then Museum of Man (now the Canadian Museum of Civilization) in the 1960s. He was inspired, as I was later, by the rich collection of native kayaks in the museum. He, too, has had a lifelong interest in this fascinating watercraft and its uses. His field work and other research have resulted in numerous books and articles. This book concludes with his own essay on kayaks of the Eastern Arctic. The book is divided into two sections: Greenland and The East Canadian Arctic. The Greenland portion forms the bulk of the work. Heath's introductory essay is the longest of a series of collected essays by a variety of kayak scholars and enthusiasts.

In the volume's first and longest essay ("Kayaks of Greenland"), John Heath muses on the evolution of kayak types from Alaska to Greenland, discusses construction techniques and describes a number of interesting Greenland kayaks found in museums worldwide. His essay includes some of his line drawings. John developed a method, using only a few easily-transported instruments, for taking the lines off of museum kayak specimens. One of John's gifts to me was teaching me his technique. John was an expert in the rolling of kayaks, in both Alaska and Greenland. His essay comes alive when he describes in detail the many maneuvers Greenland kayakers used to roll their kayaks in the conditions of their particular ocean environment. He describes and illustrates nearly 40 techniques for capsizing/rolling a kayak. These maneuvers are well illustrated with photos and/or detailed drawings. As he points out, many of these are pure showmanship, used in present-day competitions. Most Greenland kayak hunters would probably know only the basic capsize prevention and recovery techniques. Heath concludes his essay with some miscellaneous remarks drawn from his voluminous field notes. The diversity of these remarks—a legend, a method of scaring away killer whales and a discussion of *kajakangst*, Danish for 'kayak anxiety'—shows his far-reaching interest in all things "kayak."

Greg Stamer, an avid paddler, credits John Heath with forging his understanding of Greenland kayak techniques. His essay ("Using Greenland Paddles: An Overview") describes the various types of Greenland paddles. He gives an interesting analysis of the difference between feathered and unfeathered paddles. The former is commonly used by recreational kayakers, the latter, in various sizes and shapes, is the traditional arctic paddle. Stamer amplifies Heath's capsize/recovery descriptions with his illustrated examples.

Harvey Golden is another passionate amateur, both as a paddler and researcher of museum specimens. He has probably built more replicas of more traditional arctic kayaks types than anyone. His essay ("Kayaks in European Museums: A Recent Research Expedition") describes 11 of 38 kayaks surveyed on trips through England, Scotland, and the Netherlands and includes clear line drawings. The kayaks are from west and east Greenland as well as from the Polar Inuit of northwest Greenland.

Hugh Collings was first inspired by John Brand (see below) to survey kayaks in Swedish collections. For his essay ("A Seventeenth-Century Kayak and the Swedish Kayak Tradition") he selected three kayaks spanning more than 300 years. The first, in the Skokolster Palace in Uppsala, is a kayak from the west coast of Greenland and dates from the 17th century. The second is another west Greenland type collected

during Knud Rasmussen's Second Thule Expedition in 1916. It was made for one of the expedition members, Thorild Wulff. The third, from east Greenland, is more recent and was used by the Danish writer and ethnographer Jörn Riel in 1968. Collings includes all measurements and copious line illustrations.

John Brand is a British architect with a long-time interest in paddling, surveying and constructing arctic kayaks. He is a contemporary of John Heath and is considered the premier kayak researcher in Britain. His *Little Kayak Book* series, excerpted in the section entitled "Kayaks in England, Wales, and Denmark," provides wonderful drawings, extensive details, provenance, survey circumstances and replication possibilities. His extensive experience in constructing and paddling his replicas lends authority to his comments on performance. Included with descriptions of nine Greenland kayaks are two East Arctic kayaks, one from Labrador and one from Baffin Island.

H.C. Petersen is the author of *Skinboats of Greenland* (1986), the seminal work on Greenland kayaks and umiaks. Petersen is a native Greenlander, born in 1925 in Maniitsoq/Sukkertoppen on the west coast of Greenland. While he was principal of Knud Rasmussen's High School in Sisimiut/Holsteinsborg between 1962 and 1975, he worked hard to ensure that the traditions linked to the construction of kayaks should not be forgotten. Much of what he knows about the Greenland kayak was learned from older, experienced Greenland kayak builders. In his brief essay ("Kayak Sports and Exercises") he discusses the training and sports aspects of traditional kayaking. Petersen writes: "As soon as a baby boy is big enough to sit on his mother's lap, the mother makes him play 'kayak games'" (p. 99). He continues, describing games intended to be useful for a hunting kayaker, from three to five-year-old boys balancing on a board, to getting in and out of a kayak, to exercises with bladder float and line, to courting a potential wife.

"A Dramatic Kayak Trip, 1899-1900: Ataralaa's Narrative" inserts an interesting first-person adventure narrative into the mix. Johannes Rosing (Ataralaa) was employed as a cooper (barrel-maker). He was 35 when he traveled from Maniitsoq (Sukkertoppen), his home, by kayak on a hunting trip. Caught in a snowstorm, he drifted, disoriented, all night until he was more than 50 km from home. The skill, stamina and endurance of Greenland kayakers are well illustrated by this tale.

The design of heavy, flat-bottomed East Arctic hunting kayaks is the antithesis of the nimble Greenlandic types. A capsized in an East Arctic kayak would probably spell *taima*, the end, for a solo paddler in arctic seas. In "Kayaks of the East Canadian Arctic" Arima discusses the minor variations in the kayak form among the various East Arctic native groups and gives a good description of how this kayak was used as a stable hunting platform. He has a lengthy section on kayak construction, including the skin covering by women. Included in this essay are lengthy excerpts from oral histories collected for the Igloodik Oral History Project. This is exciting new material. The manager of the Igloodik Research Centre, John MacDonald, himself a kayaker, was instrumental in encouraging this project. These interviews on audiocassette together with transcripts and translations are available in the Centre's archives (originals) and in

the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre, Yellowknife. These first-hand reports are invaluable for East Arctic kayak researchers and Arima is to be commended for bringing them to our attention. Arima's final section is an interesting array of archaeological evidence on the roots of arctic kayak design. He correctly claims no conclusions—the section is identified as “Speculations on Design Ancestry”—but the evidence is intriguing. This section brings us full circle back to John Heath's essay and his observations on the origins of kayak design.

This book is a very mixed collection of essays. In the book's all-too-brief introduction, Arima claims that the work is “[...] a comparative study of kayaks that focuses on historic development, design and construction and techniques” (p. ix). This implies a wholeness that is simply lacking. On my first reading, I found the eclectic nature of the content to be bewildering. On a more thorough reading, I found each of the articles to be of value, each in its own way. I was surprised to find such a brief and relatively unimportant essay by the doyen of Greenland kayak experts, H.C. Petersen. Surely something of greater depth could have been pulled from his writings. The book also needs a concluding section. There is minimal tie-in between the Greenland and East Arctic sections or the essays themselves. This could/should have been addressed. Uneven as this collection of essays is in subject and approach, it will interest any kayak *aficionado*. For the recreational paddler, the sections dealing with technique will be useful. For the historian/researcher, there is both old information to review and new to consider. The book is copiously illustrated with drawings, photographs and maps.

David W. Zimmerly
344 Lakewood Rd., RR3
Perth, Ontario K7H 3C5
Canada
dwzimmerly@arctickayaks.com

HOFFECKER, John F.

2005 *A prehistory of the North. Human settlement of the higher latitude.*
Foreword by Brian Fagan, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey, and London, 225 pages.

Voici un ouvrage de synthèse sur la préhistoire du Grand Nord rédigé par un préhistorien états-unien qui a beaucoup travaillé en Europe centrale, dans le Caucase, mais aussi en Alaska et, par extension, sur l'environnement de la Béringie et l'adaptation de l'humanité aux régions froides. Le fait qu'il soit l'œuvre d'un seul auteur distingue ce livre des trop nombreux recueils qui réunissent les contributions de divers spécialistes autour d'un thème commun au profit de la variété des approches mais au détriment de l'homogénéité et de la cohérence du traitement. La préface souligne la nouveauté de cette entreprise en ce qui concerne le Grand Nord, ce qui est sans doute vrai, du moins en anglais.

Hoffecker a choisi de présenter son sujet par le biais d'un très bref résumé, un peu simplificateur, de l'expansion viking vers l'Arctique et de la première rencontre entre